

AB 2583

College Campus Sexual Assault Safety Act

BACKGROUND

A 1994 *Ms. Magazine* "Report on Recognizing, Fighting and Surviving Date and Acquaintance Rape," surveyed more than 6,000 students at 32 colleges and universities in the U.S. The results were startling: 1 in 4 women had been victims of rape or attempted rape; 84% of those raped knew their attacker, and 57% of the rapes happened on dates; only 27% of the women whose sexual assault met the legal definition of rape thought of themselves as rape victims; and 42% of the rape victims told no one about the assault.

A study in the *Journal of College Student Development* of attitudes toward rape asked male students if they would commit acquaintance rape if they could be assured that no one would find out, and that no punishment would result. Only 40 percent said they would not. Research suggests that most college men who commit acquaintance rape or other sexual assaults perceive their behavior as justifiable.

The perpetration of violence against women and the low reporting of such crimes by victims occur because students are not conscious of methods of prevention or victims' services. Campus policy to prevent violence against female students must move beyond simply telling women how to avoid rape, and include men in the education process, while providing a supportive environment for survivors of sexual assault.

Some college campuses in California are already moving in the right direction. For example, the University of California at Davis and Cal Poly Pomona both won competitive grants from the Violence Against Women Office to fund coordinated, comprehensive campus-based programs to address violence against women. While such programs exist at college campuses in California, the quality of such programs is not consistent statewide, and little is known of the response campuses have put into place to address sexual violence. Sexual assault prevention organizations, such as the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA), have recommended further study of whether existing sexual violence programs are providing effective victims' services and preventive education.

SPECIFIC PROVISIONS OF AB 2583

AB 2583 would establish a 15-member task force to assess the structure and operations of existing campus-based programs with the goal of reducing violence against women, as well as services and support for survivors of such violence. The task force would gather information from California's campuses concerning sexual assault issues on campus. The task force would report its recommendations to the Legislature and the Judicial Council by April 1, 2004.

Task force administration and research would be funded by a grant through the Office of Criminal Justice Planning and would include representatives of California private and public higher education institutions, California campus-based sexual assault programs, California rape crisis centers, the California Attorney General's Office, the Office of Criminal Justice Planning / Sexual Assault Branch, and at-large public members.

If you support this legislation, please send letters to:

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